

[Marie Haggerty—Worcester #4]

Mass. [1938-9?] Mrs. Marie Haggerty Paper 4 [7/10/29?]

STATE MASSACHUSETTS

NAME OF WORKER EMILY B. MOORE

ADDRESS WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS

SUBJECT LIVING LORE

DATE OF INTERVIEW June 15, 1939

NAME OF INFORMANT MRS. MARIE HAGGERTY

ADDRESS WORCESTER, MASS.

1

Name: Emily B. Moore

Title: Living Lore

Assignment: Worcester

Topic: Mrs. Marie Haggerty Paper 4

"I'm very glad you came today, for I haven't been out of the house since you came last time. What, with the weather so bad and me so scart of fallin', and John not workin', poor John, he's 'bout to his wits end. He has a fight most every two weeks, but in betwix he should train, and he can't do his pacin' with the ground so bad. With things like they is, it gives a body lots of time to think, and jest today I was thinkin' how Pa and me, no matter

Library of Congress

how bad the weather was, we'd go ice fishin' down at Doherty Pond. My goodness, we used to ketch fish enough for the neighborhood, and it was fun, too. We had a boat-house right by the pond; Pa built it hisself, and it was right cosy. We had a stove in there, right in the middle, and summer times we'd cook on it, and winter times seems like everybody for miles around would change their skates, and the like there. Well, we'd go down on his days off, and he'd make a fire and I'd set there and knit, or mend, and keep my eyes on the tilts, and he'd busy hisself, tinkerin' around with this or that. When the 'tilt' would drop, I'd says 'Pa, you got a bite.' and away he 'd run; drop everything; and come back with a fish, sometimes an long as his arm. Oh, yes, he'd have a bottle of something to 'nip' at, but that was half the fun, for poor Pa would never have a drip in the house, for he was a-fear'd the boys might get the habit on account of him, them days we'd have to ourselves, and nobody bothered us, and we'd stay there till dark, and then we'd go home. 'twarent far, and by that time the children would be in for the night, and we'd have supper home, and then to bed.

2

Pa always felt better the next day, after his fishin' day. It give him time to rest up, and get the air at the same time.

"Its funny 'bout children, ain't it? I was thinkin' about Kitty, my married daughter. You know Kitty had the best of all my children, and she was sweet girl. Course I didn't like her marrying a Jew, but Aaron is a fine man, and I've nothing against him, but the first two years she was married, I didn't see nothin' of her, to speak of, but since the second baby came, she comes here a lot, or some of us is always down there. I was thinking this morning, to myself, - 'I wonder if its because she wants me to help her mind the children, - and if it is, well, - I dunno.' Well, mebbe you're right; mebbe she didn't think I'd like Aaron around, but he's a nice boy, and makes a good husband, and better than a lot of her own kind might be.

Library of Congress

"Now, I don't think you'd call them superstitions in my day, for everybody did about the same thing, and I'm sure nobody thought they were any different. Well, let's see; I well remember when I was about 13 or 14, what I heard my uncle say to my aunt. You know them days you'd have, mebbe sausages, ham, salt pork, or stew-beef for you heavy meal during the week, but Sundays we always had chichen; not so much roast chicken, but boiled or fried in different ways. Well, as far back as I could think, near to that time, we'd been having chicken during the week, and while I wondered, just a little, I satisfied myself with the thought, 'mebbe they expected company, but they didn't come'. Well, one night I was laying on the lounge, and I suppose they thought I was asleep, or mebbe they didn't think I was about. My aunt 3 was scolding my uncle for killing so many chickens, and the hens, too. I'll never forget what my uncle said. He said, 'As long as there's one of them!!! hens crowing, they'll find their way to the pot.' Next day, for it bothered me most of the night, why a hen had to be killed just because shw crowed, I asked my aunt what my uncle meant. first she didn't want to tell me. Well, after I hagged at her for a spell, she told me. It was on account of me, for all my days, as long as I could remember, I liked to whistle; I never sang; and my uncle didn't mind it when I was little, but when I started growing up, he said he'd have to do something about it, for - 'A whistling lady and a crowing hen Is sure to come to some bad end.'

There wasn't much for me to do then, but to stop whistling, for I didn't want him to kill off all the hens. He didn't mind the cackling, but sometimes they made a noise like crowing.

"Now, mebbe you'd call things like that, and some other things, superstitions. For instance, whenever my uncle would blow out a candle, he'd say, 'May the Lord send us light from Heaven.' No, I'm not superstitious but some things are facts, and I know it! Why, take 'breaking a looking-glass' that means bad luck, and I know it. Why, the year poor Pa died, my own Bill was target practicing, and he sent a bullet right through the looking-glass over the sink, in the kitchen. It missed me by inches. Well, that very year, Pa was sent to the hospital; Marie got married, had a baby still-born, and was divorced; Bill was in the hospital

Library of Congress

for 11 months; John joined the Marines and was away 4 for three years; Pa died in the hospital, never getting back home at all; Kitty married a Jew; why, goodness me, I had bad luck for seven years from the time that looking-glass was broken. They say you can break the spell if you move out of the house you live in at the time. I owned that house, but with bad luck piling up on me, I sold it at a loss, for I didn't know what else was bound to happen before the spell was broken.

I'm not superstitious about a lot of things, though, like the dead, and that, but I wouldn't like anyone to make light of things. Well, such as, raising an umbrella in the house, or the like. I wouldn't call them superstitions, just habits. No, I wouldn't let a visitor comb my hair; my aunt always said it brought sickness, and, of course, when I think of that, I wouldn't want to bring sickness to my children; for me, I wouldn't think of myself, but I look out for them. Well, yes, I don't like to pick up a glove, if I drop it, as I am going out. No, it wouldn't worry me, but it might be a 'slight' disappointment."

The little lady was quiet, thinking no doubt of something in the days when "Pa" was alive. She was so silent I thought she had fallen asleep until she spoke suddenly of a neighbor who had died. From that we drifted to the subject of funerals.

"I do remember quite well the way they had funerals in New Brunswick, and I know they always lasted for days and days, but I thought the reason for that was so that relatives could get to see their dead, but when I think back, it seems to me that a good many took a 'wake' 5 with plenty of food and drink. I remember once when some of my family died, people came for miles around and it was a custom to put baked potatoes in the coffin, and before we went to bed, for I was a little girl, they would have prayers, and then all the people would bawl right out. Oh, yes, they'd cry and cry and sometimes become hysterical. Land sakes, when I think of it, the ones who bawled the loudest and made the most fuss wasn't even any relation to the corpse. Manys the time when someone'd die, that is neighbors and the like, that lived out from our place, in the country more, my aunts and uncle would take about everything they could lay hands. on. Once when someone

Library of Congress

died that didn't amount to much my aunts didn't want to get anything ready, but my uncle made them bake up bread and pies and roast meat and the like and take it. He said that 'soul' needed 'lightin' through' the same as anyone else, and just because they was poor, they needed more than anyone else.

Oh, yes, they'd drink and smoke and set up all night telling wild stories, and each one telling more lies than the others. My aunts would always chase me off to bed. Yes, if we went to a wake at anyone's house, it was expected that we stay all night. The men folks would set around in the kitchen, takin' turns to set with the corpse, and manys the time I heard of some wild carrin's on. Some one said that once the men got feelin' good and decided to take a corpse up to set with them. My aunts said it was nonsense, that the ones they said done it, was scart to death of a corpse and wouldn't even go close enuf to see if it was cold, let alone 'tech' 6 it to bring it out of its coffin.

"You know the Irish young men were all light-hearted and full of fun, and always playin' tricks on people. Once there was a young fellow that was tellin' ghost stories at a wake, and he had the people just about believing in them, and then he sneaked out with a pretext of coverin' up his horse, but what does he do but go and get a sheet and put over him, and came sneakin' up on the people at the wake. Well, the women like-t'-die, and some of the men was scart to death, - but he met his match. One of the young men that didn't believe in ghosts, picked up a fire iron had hit him over the head, and that cured him of his pranks. No, I wasn't there, but my Aunt Bess was, and she said the 'ghost' was knocked out flattern'n a flounder. Its almost sinful to say, but I liked goin' to funerals and wakes when I was a child, for I got out of the work at home, and I say all my friends and relations. Well, after I went to Boston I didn't know so many people, so I didn't go to many wakes, and then when I did begin to go again, they wasn't like the old wakes we had at home. In Boston at wakes, all you did was go in for a prayer and come out, but the men would set around with their long pipes and smoke and eat.

Library of Congress

“Oh, yes, indeed, there was lots of stories told when I was young, but most of them a body wouldn't tell a child now, I used to set and listen the them till I shook so much you'd think I had the palsy, and I 'd be too scart to move a limb. Why, usually they was about head-less horsemen and head-less riders, that rode about in the moonlight, and 7 and, stopped travellers on lonely roads, and marked them, or gave them messages from the dead, and many times the one that was tellin' the stories would say they'd seen him and talked with him, and got sech and sech a message, and if they done what the head-less horseman told them, they's alright, but if they didn't, he'd come after him again. I remember once I was riding with my uncle at night and as we went by an old mill, somethin' white blew up in the horse's face, and he jumped on his hind feet, and I was so scart that I crawled down in the bottom of the wagon and I wouldn't come out even after we got in our own barn. I told my uncle what I though it was, and from then on, he wouldn't let them tell any more stories in our house.”